



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

July 17, 2008

For immediate release

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DNR DIRECTOR KICKS OFF PUBLIC FORUM SCHEDULE

MEDIA CONTACT: Tammie Krausman, DNR, at (515) 402-8763.

MILFORD – Richard Leopold, director of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, will be holding public forums around Iowa starting with the lodge at Gull Point State Park Wednesday, July 16.

“I’m looking forward to sharing some of the important initiatives underway within the department, but more importantly, I really want to hear from Iowa’s citizens. One thing I am particularly proud of is the rapport that the DNR has with the public. This is a relationship we value highly within the DNR,” said Leopold.

The public forum begins at 6 p.m. with Director Leopold outlining the department’s top 10 priorities, work being done to develop environmental indicators for the state, providing an update on sustainable funding for natural resources and discussion of local issues. Another hour-and-a-half will be devoted to answering questions from the public.

Other public forums scheduled for Director Leopold are as follows:

Wednesday, July 23
Walnut Woods State Park lodge

Des Moines

Thursday, July 31
Pine Lake State Park lodge
Eldora

Thursday, August 7
Lake Keomah State Park lodge
Oskaloosa

Thursday, August 21
Lake Wapello State Park lodge
Drakesville

Wednesday, August 27
Backbone State Park Beach Lodge
Dundee

Thursday, September 4
Viking Lake State Park
Stanton

For more information, contact Tammie Krausman at (515) 402-8763.

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GOVERNOR CULVER, DIRECTOR LEOPOLD ANNOUNCE FUNDING FOR WATER QUALITY PROJECTS

**MEDIA CONTACTS: Steve Hopkins, DNR, at (515) 281-6402 or
stephen.hopkins@dnr.iowa.gov**

DES MOINES — Governor Chet Culver and DNR Director Richard Leopold announced Thursday that eligible watersheds in Iowa may qualify for federal funds under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Targeted Watersheds Grant Program.

Under this program, \$4.2 million is available to support the protection and restoration of the country's water resources through a holistic watershed approach. This program is designed to encourage successful community-based approaches and techniques to protect water resources throughout the country. Governor Culver can nominate an unlimited number of meritorious projects for funding consideration by EPA. Successful applicants will be eligible for funding of \$100,000 to \$1 million.

Several Iowa projects have received funding under this program in recent years. In 2003, the Rathbun Land and Water Alliance was awarded \$600,000 to support a comprehensive watershed project to protect and improve water quality in Lake Rathbun. In 2004, the

Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship and Iowa State University were awarded \$1 million to carry out an integrated drainage tile management-wetlands project, in cooperation with three drainage districts in Palo Alto and Pocahontas counties.

Both Culver and Leopold said the grant program offers excellent opportunities for local communities looking to improve water quality.

“Water quality is a statewide issue, but the most successful efforts we see in improving water quality start at the local level,” said Culver. “When local citizens care enough about water quality to become active, the work gets done and having access to the federal dollars is a real shot in the arm for transforming interest and ideas into action and results.”

Leopold said an increasing number of communities are realizing the importance natural resources and outdoor recreation amenities play in the economic vitality of their regions.

“By investing in water quality, we support wildlife habitat, outdoor recreation and ultimately, our economy. We also make Iowa a great place to live, work and raise a family. Communities that understand these concepts and lead the effort are the ones that will have best positioned themselves for a more prosperous future,” said Leopold.

DNR will solicit applications for the program and provide recommendations to the Governor regarding projects to be submitted for funding consideration. In accordance with EPA guidance, applications will be evaluated upon their ability to apply market-based water quality projects to reduce nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment loadings, or pollutant loadings that cause low biological oxygen demand (BOD) in local waters that enter the Mississippi River system contributing to hypoxia in the Northern Gulf of Mexico.

To be considered, applications must be received by the DNR no later than August 22, 2008. Governor Culver will submit Iowa’s nominations to EPA, with final selections being determined by EPA.

Additional details on how to apply for the Targeted Watersheds Grant Program, including eligibility requirements and where to send your application can be found at www.iowadnr.gov/water/watershed/grants.html. Questions can also be directed to: Steve Hopkins, Nonpoint Program Coordinator, Iowa Department of Natural Resources (phone 515-281-6402, email: stephen.hopkins@dnr.iowa.gov).

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LEARN MORE ABOUT IOWA LANDSCAPE FROM DNR AND USGS DURING RAGBRAI

Media contact: Chad Fields, DNR Iowa Geological and Water Survey, at

(319) 335-2083 or Chad.Fields@dnr.iowa.gov, or Kaylene Carney, U.S. Geological Survey, at (319) 430-2985 (cell) or kfcarney@usgs.gov.

NOTE TO EDITORS: This is a joint press release from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Geological Survey.

DES MOINES- Riders in the 2008 Register's Annual Great Bike Ride Across Iowa (RAGBRAI), July 19-26, will have the opportunity to learn more about Iowa's landscapes through this year's "Learn about the Land" brochure series.

Created by the Iowa DNR and the U.S. Geological Survey, the series highlights landmarks, rivers and other natural resources cyclists will be traveling through during each day of the journey.

"RAGBRAI cyclists will experience many of Iowa's varied landscapes on this year's trip, and this guide will allow them to better appreciate the uniqueness of our state," said Chad Fields, DNR Iowa Geological and Water Survey Bureau. "Using the brochure is like biking with an expert who can point out different features along the route."

The brochures have several practical purposes, such as preparing participants for areas such as the Loess Hills, where the rolling landscape may require extra effort for cyclists during the first few days of the trip. Bikers can also enhance their experience by learning about nearby geological preserves and wildlife management areas or by discovering the history of the land they are traveling.

This year's guides also point out areas that have experienced damage from the floods of 2008, and include facts and brief histories of flooding in those areas.

Copies of the "Learn about the Land" RAGBRAI brochures are available online at <http://www.igsb.uiowa.edu/Pubs/Ragbrai2008/Ragbrai2008.htm> or on the USGS website at <http://ia.water.usgs.gov>. U.S. Geological Survey staff will also be handing out hard copies at campgrounds, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service will have copies at their booths, which are located between towns along the bike route.

Writer: Cassy Lalan

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BLACK HAWK COUNTY RESIDENTS ASKED TO SHARE IDEAS ON IMPROVING GEORGE WYTH LAKE

MEDIA CONTACT: Jeff Berckes at (515) 281-4791 or jeff.berckes@dnr.iowa.gov or Charles Ikenberry at (515) 281-8753 or charles.ikenberry@dnr.iowa.gov.

CEDAR FALLS – Iowans interested in improving George Wyth Lake in Black Hawk County can attend a meeting July 29 to discuss and review a recent water quality study and its suggestions for improving the lake.

George Wyth Lake is on the state’s impaired waters list because of excess *E. coli* in the water, which may indicate the presence of disease-causing pathogens. Geese that reside in the park appear to be the primary contributor to this problem.

The study, or DNR water quality improvement plan, looks at the problems and potential solutions for the problems in George Wyth Lake. It is designed as a guide for improving the lake for local resource agencies, partners, stakeholders and residents.

“We are excited to inform people about the study and discuss how the DNR and George Wyth patrons can work together to improve the lake,” said Jeff Berckes with the DNR’s Watershed Improvement program. “This meeting is the first step forward in revitalizing a great Iowa natural resource and we look forward to working with local community members to incorporate their ideas on how to put an effective plan into action.”

The DNR will ask Iowans for their input at a July 29 meeting in Cedar Falls. The meeting will begin at 7:00 p.m. at the Hartman Reserve Nature Center, 657 Reserve Dr.

Staff from the DNR’s Lake Restoration program, Watershed Improvement program and Fisheries and Wildlife bureaus will also be on hand to answer questions.

Those not able to attend the public meeting can receive more information at www.iowadnr.gov/water/watershed/tmdl/publicnotice.html and submit comments on the plan by Aug. 19 via the following ways:

E-mail: jeff.berckes@dnr.iowa.gov

Telephone: Jeff Berckes at (515) 281-4791

Mail: Jeff Berckes, care of Iowa DNR, Wallace State Office Building,
502 E. Ninth St., Des Moines, Iowa 50319

After gathering Iowans’ comments, the DNR will forward the final plan, also called by its technical name of Total Maximum Daily Load, to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for approval. Local groups interested in helping George Wyth Lake can then use the plan to assist their improvement efforts.

Writer: Cassy Lalan